DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 115 296 IR 002 846

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TITLE The Changing Communications Industry.
PUB DATE Nov 75
NOTE 6p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Educational Broadcasters (Washington, D.C., November 15-19, 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS *Employment Practices; *Equal Opportunities (Jobs); *Minority Groups; *Public Television; Telecommunication
IDENTIFIERS *National Association of Public Broadcasters

ABSTRACT

At the 1970 National Association of Educational Broadcasters convention, a minority affairs report showed that, although minorities constituted nearly 10 percent of public broadcasting employees, there was almost no minority representation at the management and professional levels. Recent statistics show little change in those employment practices. Programs should be initiated to train minority group members to assume future open positions that are projected in a 10-year industry needs study. Minorities should prepare themselves for leadership and ownership of all phases of the telecommunications industry. Federal agencies should be monitored to insure compliance with equal opportunity employment practices, and the talents of minorities should be specifically applied to designing and developing telecommunications systems to service disadvantaged communities. (EMH)

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THE CHANGING COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

By Marion Hayes Hull

How many of you were in attendance at the last NAEB convention which was held in Washington? It was November, 1970.

Those of you who were, I am sure, remember the much publicized controversy between minorities and the NAEB.

That was the convention in which headlines across the front pages of major newspapers reported that minorities and NAEB were at war. Newscasters took great delight in highlighting the walk-out of Blacks from the general meetings.

That was five years ago.

At that time, those of us who were members of NAEB looked with hope to Lionel Manogas who had recently been hired as the first director of minority affairs for NAEB. One of his first duties was to perform an assessment of minority employment needs within public broadcasting. He reported the results of that survey at the 1972 convention in Las Vegas. The report stated that less than ten percent of the employees of public broadcasting were minorities. In fact, out of a total work force of 6,919, there were only 666 minority employees. Lionel broke the survey and results down into categories, such as officials and managers, professionals, office workers and clerical positions. He showed that most of the minorities employed in public broadcasting were concentrated in positions below the professional level. At the conclusion of Lionel's report, a major recommendation was made. The recommendation was that NAEB begin a program for minority development in management positions. "Such a program", Lionel said, "will call for appointments of minority employees to management positions at stations for 18-month terms." He went on to

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say, "following the training assignments, efforts will be made to find minorities permanent management positions."

What did NAEB do with this recommendation?

I don't know, but there has not been a significant rise of minorities into management positions within public broadcasting. In fact, if we look at the status of minorities in public broadcasting today -- three years after Lionel made the recommendation -- we find the following:

- o PBS has only one minority on its 25-member board of governors -- and none on its 25-member board of managers
- o CPB has no Blacks among its top officials
- o National Public Radio have no Blacks in either top or middle management positions
- o Only one Latino is in upper level management with NPR
- o Almost 40% of the public television licenses have hired no full-time minority person
- o Only 2% of the public television stations have minorities in management and professional positions

I ask you, where is the change we expected to see as a result of the convention?

Let me ask another question. What are we as minorities doing to foster a change?

For the remainder of my paper I will make recommendations I feel are necessary to accomplish change. I recommend we employ a new strategy in addressing organizations such as NAEB; I believe the time has come for us to cease begging NAEB to listen to us. Instead, I recommend we begin to prepare ourselves for the revolution that is taking place within the telecommunications industry. We must stop playing catch-up with communications and start forging new ground. We no longer have to settle for the

crumbs that are falling as a result of Federal pressure on public broadcasting regarding employment, programming, and ownership.

I recommend our minority training programs should prepare students for employment based on projections of industry needs for the next ten years. Minority training programs can no longer afford to continue over-supplying the industry with students for which there are no jobs. They must also cease to produce persons with outdated skills.

NAEB has changed its focus from simply an associations for persons in public broadcasting to an organization which includes members in all areas of the telecommunications industry. As minorities are we responding to that change?

I recommend we explore all areas of telecommunications for employment. There is great potential for minorities in fields such as cable television, communications satellite development, fibre optics research, multi-point distribution, etc.

I recommend we as minorities, equip ourselves for roles of leadership through ownership and investment. When we own the system, we don't have to beg for recognition.

It is important that we meet in sessions like this to exchange ideas and information. However, we should not let this be the prime objective for attending NAEB conventions. The most important sessions for us should be those designed for professional growth and development. We need to be in sessions on engineering, research, programming and broadcast education.

I recommend we expand our areas of concern to include monitoring the actions of organizations and agencies such as the Federal Communications Commission, NASA, National Cable Television Association, Senate Sub-Committee

on Communications, and others. There are numerous license challenges to broadcast stations every year. However, seldom are we concerned over the under-representation of minorities in satellite demonstration. Only a few minority communicators respond to the FCC's request for comments on proposed rule making. Likewise, we show almost no concern for the activities regarding the formation of national legislation. How do we ever expect to make an impact if we are not represented when decisions are being made?

Finally, I suggest a major research project needs to be taken on the national level to determine the potential role minorities can and should play in the development of telecommunications. Such a study would provide statistics on the jobs that are available or projected in all areas related to telecommunications. It would also provide suggestions for the design of training programs and suggest the best methods for recruiting minorities into the industry.

It is obvious that the emergence of new telecommunications technology offers much for minorities. Particularly, it offers unique opportunities for minorities in the design and development of telecommunications systems which can be used for the delivery of services to disadvantaged communities. In terms of community and economic development, minorities are better equipped to design and implement such systems than anyone else - for we best know the needs of disadvantaged people.

There are presently major studies being conducted across the country to assess the impact telecommunications will have on the delivery of health, education and other social services. Minorities must not only be aware of these studies, but integrally involved. For, such demonstrations have serious implications for our future, particularly in areas such as surveillance and human experimentation.

I can not emphasize too strongly the necessity for minorities to take seriously the power of new telecommunications technology and the importance of our involvement in its development. Minorities must seek ways of impacting on the telecommunications industry at the local state and national level. We must continue to challenge the established media, but at the same time, we must concern ourselves with the entire field of telecommunications. If we don't, we will continue to simply sit in sessions talking to ourselves while the rest of the rest of the world passes us by.

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